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ABSTRACT

This final report describes: (1) a model designed to help the transition of young children with special needs from early childhood programs into regular kindergarten and other regular education environments; and (2) the impact of TEEM (Transition into the Elementary Education Mainstream) Outreach in disseminating and replicating the model throughout Vermont. The TEEM model stresses the implementation of best practices in transition planning and identifies 5 such practices and 18 associated critical activities. The model also provides a five-step process for a system-wide transition program. The TEEM Outreach effort provided training institutes to 23 school districts on the development of school/district transition procedures, examined the impact of the TEEM institutes on school/district planning teams, evaluated impact on individual planning team members, and surveyed impact on families (N=28) and on children (including placements, types of transition activities, and critical factors associated with transition planning). Appendices present: a list of the best practices and critical activities; a sample format for TEEM institutes; a worksheet to develop written transition procedures; and sample transition planning forms. Includes 13 references. (DB)

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I. INTRODUCTION

This final report of the OSEP, Handicapped Children's Early Education Program State-wide Outreach Project, **TEEM Outreach**, administered by the Center for Developmental Disabilities (The University Affiliated Program of Vermont), describes: 1) a model designed to assist families and professionals plan for the successful transition of young children with special needs from early childhood programs into the kindergarten of their local elementary school and other regular education environments (e.g., cafeteria, library, playground), and 2) the impact of **TEEM Outreach** in disseminating and replicating the HCEEP-funded (September 1985 through August 1988) model demonstration project entitled Project TEEM (Transition into the Elementary Education Mainstream) throughout the State of Vermont. The TEEM model is designed to address the strengths, needs, and characteristics of children, families, and school systems; promote the implementation of best practices in transition planning; and result in the successful transition of preschool-aged children receiving early childhood special education (ECSE - Essential Early Education in Vermont) services and their families into kindergarten and other regular education environments.

A. Project Goals and Objectives

The goals of **TEEM Outreach** were to: 1) promote the successful transition of Vermont's young children with special needs and their families from early childhood programs into kindergarten classrooms and other regular education environments, 2) increase the awareness of parents and local educators concerning the need for systematic transition planning, 3) increase the number of school districts in Vermont that are replicating the TEEM model, and 4) establish a state-wide dissemination, training, and technical assistance system that is independently operational and self-supporting at the end of the proposed project.

Throughout TEEM Outreach, project staff and State Education Agency (SEA) staff collaborated in sharing information on the need for transition planning, the TEEM model, and the availability of training and technical assistance through TEEM Outreach. Articles appeared in newsletters at local, regional and state-wide levels written for families, superintendents, school board members, special education administrators, early childhood educators and service providers, and public school administrators and educators. Project staff personally contacted every special education administrator and early education coordinator in Vermont through letters, follow-up phone calls, and/or on-site meetings to discuss transition planning and offer training and technical assistance. A video on transition planning made during Project TEEM was shared with numerous families, school board members, and additional individuals from early childhood programs and public school systems and is available to groups and individuals upon request. Staff and individuals from sites who developed and are implementing written transition procedures presented at the state-wide conference of the Association for the Education of Young Children. A brochure on transition planning developed during Project TEEM by parents and project staff and revised during TEEM Outreach is continuing to be distributed to early childhood programs and other service providers who work with young children with special needs and their families.

A manual outlining the TEEM model was completed and provides information to assist the reader in: 1) implementing best practices in transition planning, 2) establishing and implementing systematic procedures which incorporate the best practices in transition planning, and 3) promoting successful transitions. This manual was distributed throughout the state of Vermont to every early childhood coordinator providing services to children with special needs and their families (including Essential Early Education, Early Education Initiative, and Head Start Coordinators) and to each elementary school principal (260 total). The manual outlines the TEEM model and provides detailed information, strategies, examples, and materials for implementing the model. The SEA staff has multiple copies of the manual to distribute when a need to focus on transition

planning is identified by individuals they encounter in their ongoing work throughout Vermont. In addition to ongoing information-sharing and collaborative efforts around transition planning, project staff met with SEA staff to share information about the progress of specific school districts in developing and implementing transition procedures and identified for them which planning teams throughout Vermont indicated a willingness to serve as consultants to others within Vermont who request training and/or technical assistance. Specific training money was set aside to support such a network of consultants, although districts have shared materials and information on an ongoing basis throughout TEEM Outreach in a variety of ways.

Please refer to Section III for more detailed information on the impact of TEEM Outreach during the three years of the project.

II. THE TEEM MODEL

The following pages describe the TEEM model which has enabled Vermont families and professionals to collaboratively develop transition procedures for the successful integration of young children with special needs in their local elementary schools. This model for planning the transition and entry of young children with special needs into their local public schools was developed based on the following three criteria:

the model should address the strengths, needs, and characteristics of children, families, and school systems;

the model should promote the implementation of best practices in transition planning; and

the model should result in the successful transition of children to kindergarten and other regular education environments.

A. Best Practices and Critical Activities in Transition Planning

Best practices are those practices (or activities) that have been validated through current research and experience and have been determined to represent the current state of the art by a consensus of experts in the field. Project TEEM staff identified five best practices in the area of transition it recommends schools incorporate into the development and implementation of their system-wide transition processes. These statements of best practice have evolved through a review of the literature and other transition projects, and the experiences of Project TEEM/TEEM Outreach in Vermont. Eighteen critical activities specifically delineate and operationalize each best practice statement. These best practices and critical activities, listed in Appendix A, enable families and their children with special needs to make smooth, successful transitions from early childhood programs to kindergarten and other regular education environments.

The order in which best practices and critical activities appear in Appendix A and on the following pages does not necessarily reflect a specific order in which they should be implemented (e.g., a critical activity from Best Practice III may be implemented before one from Best Practice I). A brief discussion of each best practice and its associated critical activities follows.

BEST PRACTICE I: Family members should receive the necessary information, support, and opportunities to enable them to participate as equal partners in planning their child's transition.

Recognition that the family plays a constant and primary role in the child's life underlies the need for families to be an integral part of the planning process. A child's transition from an early childhood special education program to a regular kindergarten classroom is challenging for some families (Johnson et al., 1986). This transition highlights the fact that service programs and professionals are different from setting to setting throughout the child's life. Providing information, support, and opportunities for participation helps families address their goals and desires. Professionals must make partnerships with families an important goal (Hains et al., 1988; Hanline & Knowlton, 1988; Fowler, Chandler, Johnson & Stella, 1988; Johnson et al., 1986). Project TEEM staff identified **four critical activities** described below which assist families in addressing their

identified needs and goals and participating in the transition at the level they desire.

Implementation of these critical activities communicates to families that the school is committed to a planning process which enables children and families to enter the next placement with as much preparation as necessary. Families are an integral part of transition planning and need information which facilitates their contribution to the planning process and allows them to make informed decisions about their child. The involvement of the family and demonstrated support for that involvement by elementary school staff establishes mutual trust and understanding between the family and staff and further enhances the development of a collaborative relationship.

Critical Activity 1: *Families should receive information about the school's transition policies and procedures.*

Families must receive information about any transition planning activities which occur whether formal (i.e., written transition procedures and/or transition policies for all children) or informal (e.g., unwritten procedures which are neither system-wide nor commonly understood). Professionals may share this information with families as early as two years prior to a child's transition. Providing this information informs families that the school system has a mechanism in place to support systematic transition planning. It also clarifies what to expect, how decisions will be made, and that the family's involvement is valued.

Information about the transition should be given in person and in writing. Information provided verbally gives families the opportunity to ask questions. Written information provides families with something to refer to throughout the transition process. TEEM staff, in collaboration with some family members, developed a brochure for parents which provides an overview of a typical transition process. Some model sites developed and distributed their own brochures to all families served through their early childhood special education program.

Critical Activity 2: *The family's goals for their child's transition, the types of information and support needed, and their desired level of participation should be determined as part of the transition process.*

It is critical that the early childhood special education program determine family aspirations and goals regarding their child's transition into kindergarten. Usually, a staff member from the early childhood special education program who has established a rapport

with the family meets to discuss the family's ideas regarding the transition. It is important to determine how the family and school can support each other in planning for the child's transition (e.g., the family provides inservice training, the school provides transportation for classroom observations, or the school principal visits the child's home). Addressing family-identified needs for information, support, and involvement serves to maintain a strong family-school partnership in the next educational setting. The work of Susan Fowler and her colleagues (Fowler et al., 1988; Hains et al., 1988; Johnson et al., 1986) provides examples of specific instruments and procedures which enable professionals to implement these activities.

Critical Activity 3: *Families should receive assistance in obtaining the desired information, support, and opportunities for participation in planning their child's transition.*

Addressing a family's information and support needs is an ongoing activity which begins with the family's initial meeting with the early childhood special education staff and continues throughout the transition process. The assistance provided should be determined by the family and should enable them to address their information and support needs independently as much as possible. For example, if the family requests information concerning the elementary school, the early childhood special educator should provide the information or the name and phone number of someone at the elementary school who can answer the family's questions (e.g., the principal or the kindergarten teacher).

Professionals should offer families numerous opportunities to participate in their child's transition (Hains et al., 1988; Hanline & Knowlton, 1988; Johnson et al., 1986). Following are three essential contributions families make to the transition process and suggestions for encouraging family participation.

First, families can share information with their child's current and prospective teachers. Families have a knowledgeable and invaluable perspective on their children. Because they see their child at home and in other settings, they alone have certain information concerning their child's strengths, needs, likes, and dislikes. Offering opportunities for families to share this information will facilitate making decisions with accurate and complete information.

Second, families can communicate their personal goals and collaborate in the decision-making process. Families should assume a major decision-making role in planning for their child's future because the results of those decisions directly affect the family. Transition planning procedures that maximize the family's decision-making role will generate their support for decisions, foster feelings of trust

toward the child's future teachers and administrators, and positively affect the family's role in future transitions.

Finally, families can promote a successful transition by assisting their child and professionals. Families are invaluable partners. Because they are with their child more often than are professionals, families have a significant impact on their child's acquisition of skills and attitudes. Families may choose to assist in the transition by teaching their child specific skills for coping with changes and new settings. In addition, parents may assist professionals by demonstrating techniques they have found successful at home.

Critical Activity 4: *The family and elementary school staff should identify the methods they will use to share information once the child is enrolled in kindergarten.*

Prior to the child's entry into the elementary school, the family and receiving staff should agree upon a means by which to share information. Opportunities for communication between families and elementary staff may be less frequent than those between families and early childhood staff. Parents and teachers should discuss and clearly delineate how and when they will communicate with one another. Decisions made about information-sharing should be acceptable and comfortable to families and professionals.

BEST PRACTICE II: Planning the child's transition from an early childhood special education program to kindergarten and elementary school should occur in a systematic, individualized, timely, and collaborative fashion.

For children to successfully enter kindergarten and elementary school, a transition planning process must exist which:

is individualized to address the unique needs of the child and family,

begins well before the child enters the classroom (e.g., at least one year prior), and

promotes and reflects the collaborative efforts of families and professionals (Hutinger, 1981).

The transition process should address the specific strengths, needs, and characteristics of each individual child and family. Planning and carrying out the child's transition from an early childhood special education program to the elementary school should be a collaborative effort among a number of individuals (i.e., the child's

family, early childhood special educators, kindergarten teachers, other special and regular education staff, district special education administrators, the building principal, preschool or day-care teachers, paraprofessionals, and other relevant individuals). Each individual brings a unique perspective and invaluable expertise to the planning process and can contribute to the success of the child's transition. No individual has the expertise and knowledge to make all decisions and deal with all potential situations involved in the child's transition.

Collaboration among all persons who have a vested interest in the child's transition promotes:

correct and appropriate Individual Education Plan (IEP) decisions concerning placement and/or services through shared information and expertise,

ownership of the decisions made and positive feelings toward the child, and

support and encouragement from administrators (particularly the principal) who view the child as their responsibility.

Project staff identified the following **six critical activities** which should occur to facilitate the implementation of a systematic, individualized, timely, and collaborative planning process.

Critical Activity 5: *Local elementary school staff should be informed well in advance about children with special needs who will be entering kindergarten.*

Informing the local elementary school staff well in advance about children scheduled to enter kindergarten from an early childhood special education program ensures that school administrators are aware of those children whose transitions may require a greater amount of planning, preparation, and budget appropriations. Staff from the early childhood special education program may meet annually with the building principal to discuss briefly the entering children and their needs. It is recommended that this activity occur at least one year prior to a child's entry into the public school (i.e., the preceding fall). If the child's transition requires a great deal of preparation, families and professionals may need to exchange information earlier to have adequate time for making the necessary preparations.

Critical Activity 6: *Early childhood special education and elementary school staff who will collaborate with the child's family to initiate and coordinate the transition planning process should be identified early in the transition process.*

An initial step in the transition process for each child (usually occurring at least one year prior to the child's entry in the elementary school) is to identify those individuals who will assume responsibility for initiating and coordinating the transition planning process. The "transition coordinators" should include one or more members of the child's family (if they so choose), one representative from the child's early childhood special education program (the sending program), and one representative from the elementary school he or she will enter (the receiving program). If members of the child's family choose not to be transition coordinators, they may assist in the selection of the coordinators, and the coordinators should work in collaboration with family members.

Identifying transition coordinators who represent the early childhood special education program and the elementary school program is important for promoting communication between the child's family and the two programs throughout the transition process. The method of determining the representatives will vary from district to district. The transition coordinators' role is to ensure that each step in the transition planning process occurs in a systematic and timely fashion. Their responsibilities include:

acting as a liaison between each program and the child's family,

initiating the transition planning process in collaboration with the child's family,

identifying key participants in the child's transition and informing them about their potential involvement,

facilitating the development of the individual child's transition plan, and

facilitating the implementation and coordination of activities critical to a successful transition.

Project staff found that the early childhood program staff person (e.g., the program coordinator or teacher) and family members typically assume responsibility for initiating the transition process, identifying and informing the elementary school transition coordinator, and coordinating activities that occur specifically in the early childhood educational setting. The elementary school staff person typically assumes responsibility for managing the planning activities that take place in the elementary school setting (e.g., preparing the receiving school). Transition coordinators usually assume other responsibilities including identifying who should be on the child's transition planning team and facilitating the development of the transition plan. The roles and responsibilities of transition coordinators must be clearly delineated, and coordinators must have the time, flexibility, and authority to carry out their responsibilities.

If, for example, the kindergarten teacher is the designated elementary school transition coordinator, he or she must have the principal's support (e.g., release time for meetings) and authority to make initial decisions and carry out critical responsibilities.

Critical Activity 7: *The child's potential kindergarten classroom placement should be identified early in the transition process.*

Identifying the child's potential kindergarten placement promotes individualized and timely planning in three ways. First, it enables the family and the receiving staff to develop a relationship early in the transition process. Second, it allows the kindergarten classroom teacher to observe the child in his or her current environment and determine how to prepare the classroom to best meet the needs of the child. And third, it enables the receiving classroom teacher to become actively involved in planning and sharing information about his or her program, which will help the early childhood special education program identify appropriate strategies which reflect that particular teacher's classroom practices.

In many of the rural school districts which participated in TEEM, placement decisions were unnecessary because the family's home town had one kindergarten classroom. In school districts where more than one option exists, it is important to identify the child's potential kindergarten placement as soon as necessary based on the needs of the individual child. A comprehensive planning process will ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that the child's IEP goals are met in the new setting. Project staff found that placement decisions may be made up to one year in advance. Many elementary schools participating in TEEM also attempted to distribute children with special needs in all of the available kindergarten classrooms to prevent one classroom teacher from receiving all of the children making a transition from the early childhood special education program. This practice helps maintain heterogeneous classroom populations.

Critical Activity 8: *A transition planning team should be established for each child.*

The formation of an individual planning team which involves everyone with a vested interest in the success of the child's transition into public school may contribute to the development of:

an effective and efficient system for sharing information;

a planning and decision-making process that acknowledges and addresses the concerns, goals, and ideas of everyone and promotes group ownership of decisions;

a source/pool of expertise and energy; and

a means for recognizing and supporting the efforts and participation of each member of the team.

The planning team, rather than one or two individuals, becomes the primary decision-maker and is responsible for implementing an individual transition plan.

The planning team should include the child's family, the early childhood and elementary school transition coordinators, the receiving kindergarten teacher (if a specific classroom placement has been made) or a representative kindergarten teacher, special and related services staff, paraprofessionals, the special education administrator, the elementary school principal, and other individuals identified by the family who provide services to the child and family (e.g., private preschool or day care staff, health services staff and social services staff). Project staff found that including the kindergarten teacher and building principal in the planning team can be particularly critical because they provide considerable expertise and authority. The principal provides support for teachers and parents, and the kindergarten teacher offers knowledge concerning his or her classroom and curriculum and effective instructional procedures for all kindergarten-aged children.

The establishment and operation of a transition planning team has proven to be essential for promoting a successful transition. It also has been one of the more difficult activities to implement. Finding times when everyone can meet and facilitating large group meetings in an efficient, positive, and collaborative manner requires considerable effort. Teams must identify necessary resources and/or training which will facilitate the effective and efficient functioning of the team.

Critical Activity 9: *Information about the child and the education programs important to the transition process should be identified and exchanged among transition team members.*

It is important that families, sending staff, and receiving staff identify their own information needs and determine a means for exchanging this information in a timely, satisfactory fashion. The work of Edgar and his colleagues (Gallaher, Maddox, & Edgar, 1984) highlights this particular practice. Their manual presents several strategies and ideas for promoting better communication and coordination between sending and receiving programs. Several steps include: (1) early childhood special education and elementary school staff specify the information they desire from each other and determine how the information will be exchanged; (2) early childhood staff compile a list of assessments and other information about the

child and determine, with the elementary school staff, what and how the information will be transferred; and (3) early childhood and elementary school staff give each other feedback concerning the usefulness of the information received (Gallaher et al., 1984). Project staff developed a form for participating school districts which helps early childhood special education programs summarize pertinent student information to share with elementary school staff.

Critical Activity 10: *The child's individual transition plan should be developed well in advance of his or her entry into kindergarten.*

The development of a child's written transition plan ensures that transition planning activities are individualized. The transition plan should include:

activities which promote the child's and family's successful transition,

the individual(s) responsible for ensuring that the activities are implemented, and

time lines for implementation of the specific activities.

The transition plan, developed by the child's planning team, provides a mechanism to structure transition planning for a child and specifies the activities that must occur to ensure a transition which is satisfactory and successful for everyone involved. The scope and timing of activities in the plan will vary among children according to the amount and type of preparation necessary.

BEST PRACTICE III: The early childhood special education program should provide opportunities for the child to learn developmentally appropriate skills which promote the child's successful participation in kindergarten and other regular education environments.

Kindergarten classroom and elementary school settings differ significantly from home and preschool settings (Fowler, 1982; Walter & Vincent, 1982; Vincent et al., 1980). Increased class size, daily routines, and typical kindergarten activities may require that children function more independently; acquire new skills in large group settings; learn new rules, routines and expectations; and learn to interact with new adults and peers. Transition planning begun prior to, or at the beginning of, the child's last year in the early childhood special education program enables the child's teachers and parents to provide opportunities for the child to learn skills which assist the child in adapting to the challenges of a new setting (Hains et al., 1988; Fowler, 1982; Vincent et al., 1980).

It is not the purpose of this best practice to promote or support decision-making about kindergarten "readiness." This best practice and its associated critical activities emphasize providing opportunities to learn skills and using instructional practices that are developmentally appropriate and do not impose an extension of kindergarten- and early elementary-grade curricula into the preschool program. While parents and teachers may engage in activities which assist the child in adapting to the new setting, implementing this practice does not require that the child be "fully prepared" before he or she can enter kindergarten. Children with and without special needs will enter the elementary school who do not demonstrate all the desired skills for successful participation. Regardless of the child's abilities, the school system must be prepared to meet every child's unique strengths and needs. TEEM staff identified **three critical activities** to operationalize this best practice.

Critical Activity 11: *Skills for enhancing the child's successful participation in the kindergarten classroom and elementary school should be identified early in the transition process.*

Vincent et al. (1980), Fowler (1982), and McCormick (1982) identified several student "survival" skills that kindergarten teachers have indicated are critical for participating in a kindergarten setting. These survival skills such as "following routines," "following directions," and "large group participation," typically target important social-behavioral skills and very rarely include traditional academic skills (Vincent et al., 1980). Kindergarten teachers who participated in Project TEEM/TEEM Outreach repeatedly confirmed this observation. When the child's future placement is known, the receiving teacher's priorities should be determined. The early childhood staff can then incorporate appropriate skills in the curriculum.

Critical Activity 12: *Teaching and management practices and routines used in the kindergarten classroom and elementary school should be identified.*

In addition to identifying survival skills, it is important to identify instructional routines, teaching practices, and behavior management procedures used in the kindergarten classroom (Conn-Powers & Wiest-Brown, 1986; Fowler, 1982; Vincent, 1980). The kindergarten classroom may differ considerably from the early childhood program. Kindergarten activities may be conducted in large groups, whereas most preschool activities are conducted in small groups or individually; kindergarten large groups may be more structured than groups in the preschool program; and there is less

individual teacher attention and direction in kindergarten. The preschool experience may not afford children the opportunity to develop skills for participating and learning in the kindergarten setting. Identifying the major instructional routines and practices of a new setting allows the child's family and early childhood educators to determine which practices are appropriate to include in the child's preschool program. It is important that these routines and practices be determined early in the transition process.

Critical Activity 13: *If appropriate, the child should be provided with opportunities to learn developmentally appropriate skills, and kindergarten routines and teaching practices should be integrated into the child's preschool program.*

The family and early childhood special education program staff may include the developmentally appropriate "survival skills" or "enabling skills" not already in the child's repertoire in the IEP implemented during the child's last year in the early childhood program. The early childhood special education staff should also incorporate opportunities for children to participate in kindergarten-like routines and include appropriate kindergarten teaching and management practices in the child's preschool program.

BEST PRACTICE IV: The elementary school should prepare to successfully integrate and educate the child in the kindergarten and elementary school.

As important as it is to prepare the child for the elementary school, it is even more important that the elementary school prepare the physical setting, staff, and curriculum for the child (Conn-Powers, Ross-Allen & Holburn, 1990). Preparation of the receiving classroom and school to serve the young child with special needs is absolutely necessary for a successful transition. It is unacceptable to place the burden of success on the child and family. Ultimately, the elementary school must meet the needs of every child.

There are many ways to prepare the elementary school to meet the unique needs of children with special needs. It is necessary to assess staff training needs, determine equipment required, and identify and remove barriers in the physical structure that prevent the child's access to certain areas of the school. If the elementary school staff feel they do not have the expertise to address the unique needs of the child, they should identify and obtain training and technical assistance. If additional materials or equipment are needed in the kindergarten classroom or elementary school to support the child and the classroom teacher, these resources should be determined and obtained. In short, all barriers to a successful transition must be

identified and addressed prior to the child's entry into the public school.

Project staff identified **three critical activities** for preparing the building, classroom, curriculum, and instructional staff for the entering child.

Critical Activity 14: *Prior to the child's entry into the elementary school, public school staff should obtain necessary training and technical assistance.*

In many school districts, implementing a systematic transition planning process that promotes the integration and education of children with special needs in the elementary school presents significant challenges for the professionals involved. For example, many elementary school staff feel they do not have the training or time to deliver services to children with special needs within the kindergarten classroom and elementary school. These types of challenges can be addressed through training and technical assistance and through administrative support such as providing release time and hiring substitutes so staff may participate in planning and training activities. There must be a formal process for the child's planning team to identify and obtain needed information and skills for everyone involved in the child's transition.

Critical Activity 15: *Prior to the child's entry into the elementary school, the school should obtain necessary resources including personnel, instructional materials, and adaptive equipment and should complete building improvements.*

One of the transition planning team's major roles is to identify the additional resources the elementary school may need to successfully educate the child. Some children, because of their social, physical, and learning needs, may require additional staff, new learning materials, adaptive equipment (e.g., special chairs, a prone board, or a computer), and physical plant adaptations and improvements (e.g., ramps for wheelchairs, wider bathroom doors, or an elevator to promote access to all parts of the school building) to enable them to participate as fully as possible in the day-to-day activities of the school and classroom. These additional resources must be identified and obtained prior to the child's entry into the elementary school.

In many school systems, it is particularly important that the transition planning team identify needed resources early in the transition process. Schools typically plan and submit their budget proposals one year in advance. If costly resources must be acquired or

barriers removed, it is imperative that these future expenses be incorporated in the budget.

Critical Activity 16: *Prior to the child's entry into the elementary school, the transition planning team should determine strategies for promoting the child's successful participation in each kindergarten and school activity.*

It is critical that the child's transition team develop a plan that specifies the goals, adaptations, strategies, and resources necessary for ensuring an integrated, appropriate educational experience before the child enters the kindergarten classroom (Conn-Powers et al., 1990). Planning in detail how the child will participate in each activity during the school day helps to ensure that all resources are in place from the first day of school and that the child's goals and needs are met effectively throughout the day.

A recommended procedure for implementing this critical activity is the development of an integration plan. This plan should specify:

the child's daily schedule;

the social and educational goals to be addressed during each activity;

the person(s) responsible for each activity;

the necessary adaptations (including special materials and/or equipment); and

the additional intervention procedures and strategies necessary for ensuring a successful, integrated educational experience.

The development of this plan for educating and supporting the child (and school staff) in the elementary school typically occurs in the spring of the child's last year in the early childhood special education program. The transition planning team examines the typical kindergarten day and the individual child's strengths and needs and then identifies:

the kindergarten activities that typically and naturally elicit the skills and behaviors the child needs to acquire and into which the child's IEP objectives can be integrated (rather than creating separate "special" times for working on the same skills), and

the additional skill needs and intervention strategies necessary for promoting the child's social and educational participation in each kindergarten activity.

Not only are special education and related services integrated into the kindergarten routine, but an underlying goal is to promote and support the child's integrated participation in the kindergarten classroom. This plan helps to ensure that there is coordinated delivery of services from the first day of school and represents a final effort by the planning team to make the child's transition as successful as possible.

BEST PRACTICE V: The elementary school staff should provide the necessary services to promote and support the child's placement, integration, and education in the kindergarten classroom and elementary school.

The best practices and associated critical activities already discussed have primarily emphasized what can and should be done prior to the child's entry in kindergarten and elementary school. Implementation of the critical activities described should enable the child's planning team to accomplish a successful transition.

Best Practice V focuses on the child's actual entry into the kindergarten classroom. Its purpose reflects the major goal of Project TEEM/TEEM Outreach — to promote the successful integration and education of young children with special needs in regular education settings. This best practice and its associated critical activities ensures that the child's placement is successful by prescribing the implementation of activities for identifying and addressing unforeseen problems. This best practice implies that the transition planning process should not end once the child enters elementary school. The planning team should continue to serve as a resource after the child's transition. If problems arise, they can be identified and addressed by the team quickly and effectively.

Project staff identified **two critical activities** for ensuring the child receives the support and services he or she needs to participate and learn in kindergarten and elementary school.

Critical Activity 17: *Elementary school staff should monitor the child's participation in the kindergarten classroom and other elementary school settings.*

The primary goal of this activity is to establish procedures for monitoring the child's progress and, if necessary, develop an intervention plan to address people's concerns. Kindergarten

teachers and families are frequently concerned that the child with special needs will be "dumped" in the classroom with little support or services available. A monitoring system, in conjunction with a well-delineated plan for educating and supporting the child, should provide a support system which adequately addresses these concerns.

Critical Activity 18: *Early childhood special education staff should provide the child, family, and elementary school staff with follow-up support.*

Many families and professionals communicate the need for the early childhood staff to maintain some involvement or at least be accessible after the child's entry into elementary school. Early childhood staff, along with the child's family, have considerable experience with the individual child. They may have invaluable ideas for successfully addressing unforeseen problems.

Establishing a simple procedure for families or elementary school staff to gain access to the child's former teachers is sufficient for carrying out this critical activity. Some schools which participated in TEEM simply confirmed with the early childhood special education staff that it was appropriate to call if they needed help. It is recommended that the child's transition planning team (including the early childhood staff) meet once after the child has entered the elementary school. The purpose of this meeting is to assess how well the transition is going and to begin planning the child's transition to first grade.

Implementing the best practices and associated critical activities presented in this section will support families and professionals in planning for the transition and entry of young children with special needs into the kindergarten classroom and elementary school. Incorporating these best practices in the development and implementation of a school's transition process will contribute to a more satisfactory and successful transition for young children, their families, and the professionals involved. While the timing and extent to which the critical activities are implemented will vary among children, families, and school systems, their implementation is necessary at some level.

B. Establishing a System-Wide Transition Process

The following pages outline steps to guide school systems in the development, implementation, and evaluation of systematic transition planning procedures which incorporate the best practices and critical activities presented in Chapter 2. The TEEM model does not prescribe a single, standard model for transition planning. Rather, it provides families and school systems with information, guidelines, and a planning framework or structure to establish a transition process. The model promotes the active collaboration of families and early childhood and elementary school personnel in developing a transition process which addresses the unique needs of families and individual schools or districts in planning for the successful transition of all children with special needs to kindergarten and other regular education environments. The TEEM planning model includes the following five major steps.

Step One: Establish a Planning Team

The planning team is responsible for developing a system-wide transition planning process. The team should be composed, for example, of parents and direct service personnel from sending and receiving programs, including early childhood staff and kindergarten teachers, building principals, the special education administrator and staff, school board members, and other relevant personnel. Establishing a broad-based planning team is important for several reasons. First, it ensures a transition planning process is developed which addresses the unique concerns and needs of everyone involved. Second, it collectively focuses a number of people with different perspectives and expertise on commonly identified transition problems. And finally, involving a broad constituency promotes a greater understanding of, ownership for, and commitment to the process developed. As one principal noted, *a planning team promotes shared power and leverage in developing a transition process that meets the needs of all concerned.* It is critical that early childhood and public school administrators support the activities and decisions of this planning group and be members of the team.

Once established, the planning team must continually identify the training and technical assistance its members require throughout the process of developing transition procedures. The team should

meet several times to acquire information about best practices in transition planning and to draft system-wide procedures.

Planning teams participating in TEEM noted that there must be a key person in the school district to "get the ball rolling" — someone who identifies the need for systematic transition planning and is committed to initiating the process. The special education administrator, an early childhood staff member, and/or the building principal typically identified key people and either recruited them as members of the planning team or invited a number of individuals representing a broad constituency to a general information meeting or inservice about transition planning. A planning team was recruited at the end of this "awareness" session or introductory inservice.

The composition of teams from districts participating in TEEM varied according to the different types of service delivery in the district. Teams included parents, principals, special education administrators, early childhood special education staff and/or other early childhood staff (e.g., from Head Start or private preschool), kindergarten and first grade teachers, speech-language pathologists, learning specialists, paraprofessionals, related services personnel, and other individuals identified by a school or district as important to the planning team. The inclusion of parents on the team is critical. One principal noted that *parents will ensure that the process addresses their concerns and will be committed to making the transition process work.*

Step Two: Develop Goals and a Philosophy Statement Regarding Transition Planning

The involvement of all planning team members in the development of goals and a philosophy statement addressing transition planning should promote involvement in, commitment to, and ownership for the transition process to be developed. Drafting a philosophy statement based on identified goals serves as a guide for developing, implementing, and evaluating transition procedures. Once written, transition procedures should address the identified goals and operationalize the philosophy.

Participating teams used a collaborative process to draft their goals and philosophy statements. The planning team must first determine current transition practices so all team members have a common framework from which to proceed. Members of the team can then identify their issues or concerns regarding current and/or past transition practices and their goals for future transition planning. This process ensures that everyone's concerns and expectations are addressed by the team's goals and philosophy and allows individuals with diverse backgrounds and expertise to work together toward a

shared objective. (These activities may take place during a designated inservice or in an initial planning meeting.)

Project staff developed a number of transition goals which provide planning teams with a model to adapt and adopt. These goals are presented in TABLE 1.

TABLE 1

Goals of a Successful Transition

To promote the rapid adjustment of the child and family to kindergarten and elementary school.

To enhance the child's successful participation in kindergarten and elementary school.

To ensure the uninterrupted provision of appropriate services to support the child's integration and education within kindergarten and elementary school.

To support and empower the family as an equal partner in the transition process.

To promote collaboration among all individuals who are or should be involved with the child's education.

To increase all participants' satisfaction with:
the transition process,
their participation in transition planning, and
the results of the transition process.

To increase the likelihood that the child is maintained in the kindergarten classroom and that the transition process continues to ensure the child's successful participation in subsequent regular education environments.

Step Three: Develop <u>Written</u> Transition Planning Procedures

Written transition planning procedures promote timely and systematic transition planning and ensure the development of a process which has clearly defined and coordinated roles and responsibilities and can be individualized for each child and family. Written procedures are relatively easy to share to keep everyone informed and promote their understanding of the school's transition process. Written procedures also prevent confusion, promote continuity, and minimize disruptions when there is staff turnover.

Participants in TEEM noted that written procedures provide a "sense of security" because there is a system in place which promotes shared responsibility for planning and can meet the individual needs of all involved. Participants noted that a formal system supports parents by addressing their individual concerns and by enabling staff to be responsive to children and families involved in transitions.

The planning team meets to record the specific activities, strategies, roles, and responsibilities of key individuals involved in the transition process and potential time lines for accomplishing each activity. The written procedures should address the concerns and goals of the team and incorporate and support implementation of the five best practices in transition planning.

To assist planning teams, TEEM staff developed a worksheet which lists the five best practices and critical activities for promoting their implementation discussed in the previous section. This worksheet includes space to record procedures for implementing each activity, who the responsible persons are, and time lines for initiating and completing each procedure or activity. The worksheet also assists the planning team in assessing and identifying what transition activities already exist and whether they adequately address the implementation of best practices. This worksheet is a guideline. Teams may choose to use it completely or in part or may develop their own format for drafting procedures. However the team chooses to proceed, the resulting draft of transition procedures will undergo numerous revisions and adaptations as people use it on an ongoing basis for transition planning.

Planning teams should meet as often as necessary to draft transition procedures. The amount of time involved will depend on a number of factors such as whether or not transition procedures already exist, the length of planning team meetings, and the number of individuals involved in writing the procedures. If planning teams choose to meet for half days, drafting procedures may require three to four meetings. If planning teams meet for one or two hours at a time, the process may require up to eight meetings. To function successfully and efficiently during these meetings, teams should engage in collaborative team behavior including using an agenda generated by the team and assigning specific roles (e.g., a facilitator/encourager, a recorder and a timekeeper) which team members share on a rotating basis.

One special education administrator stressed that developing transition procedures is similar to curriculum development and should be accorded the same level of importance and amount of time. She noted that it is much more effective to devote one or two full days to developing procedures than to meet repeatedly for one or two hours

after school. A concentrated period of time helps the planning team focus on the development of procedures without the distraction of events and situations typical of a school day.

Written procedures may be either school-based or district-wide. The level of autonomy of each school within a given district may have an impact on which type of procedures is chosen. Some TEEM participants felt that if school personnel write their own procedures, they may assume more responsibility for implementing them. And in districts where individual school-based procedures were developed, a set of district-wide procedures could be synthesized from the common elements among the individual sets of procedures. Other schools chose to draft procedures for their particular school, implement and gain support for them for a year, evaluate implementation of the procedures, and then adapt them for children's transitions to all schools. Many teams have written procedures to facilitate transitions across all grade levels and even for post-school placement.

After the planning team completes the written draft of transition procedures (using either the TEEM worksheet or its own process), the team should review the procedures to ensure that they will meet the goals and operationalize the philosophy statement developed in Step Two. The team should then choose a format members feel will work best for their school or district and can be easily shared with families and district personnel.

Step Four: Gain System-Wide Support and Commitment

It is critical that the transition procedures have the support and involvement of all parties not participating in the development process to ensure that:

- the process addresses the needs and goals of the sending and receiving programs,
- there is administrative support for and involvement in the planning process for individual transitions, and
- staff are equally committed to the planning process and the implementation of best practices for children and families.

The planning team must identify strategies to promote system-wide knowledge and understanding of the transition process and elicit feedback which can be incorporated into the written procedures. The procedures must be shared with all potential users, particularly program administrators who were not involved in their development. Dissemination strategies may include presentations by members of the

planning team for families, direct service staff, administrators, and school boards.

Administrative support is critical to successful implementation of transition procedures. Administrators may:

dedicate inservice time to addressing concerns specific to the transition of individual children;

hire substitutes and arrange release time for staff to plan and visit among programs;

attend meetings and participate in transition planning for individual children;

support decisions made by individual planning teams;

advocate for funding or changes in the system; and

reinforce the efforts of families and sending and receiving staff through articles in school newsletters, announcements at school board meetings, and communication with other districts, for example.

Administrative endorsement of transition planning will provide the impetus for all district staff to commit to the transition process.

Support for and commitment to the process from other school or district staff (e.g., teachers and paraprofessionals) may require that they change their professional roles. Individuals may need to acquire new skills in collaborative team work, communicating with families, observing future educational environments (i.e., the physical set-up, routines, and instructional strategies), targeting and acquiring resources, engaging in advance planning, adapting curriculum, and providing consultation and assistance to peers. School staff may assume new roles as cooperative team members and may change their attitudes as they learn to view parents as equals in the education process, accommodate differences by allowing adaptations and alternative activities to occur in the classroom, and work cooperatively as team members. In addition, school staff must willingly share unique skills, "brainstorm" and seek alternatives to overcome perceived "barriers" to transition and integration, commit to gaining new knowledge (e.g., through in-service or one-to-one consultation), and share successes and learning experiences with staff in future educational settings.

Individuals from planning teams made several suggestions for promoting ongoing awareness and understanding of and support for the transition process including:

incorporating transition procedures into the district or school handbook,

reviewing transition procedures during inservices and orientations,

sharing transition procedures at primary team meetings early in the school year,

pairing staff members familiar with the process with those unfamiliar with it to provide orientation to the procedures,

holding meetings in each building to explain procedures to new people and provide review for others,

sharing procedures with school boards (e.g., making slide presentations illustrating how procedures apply to individual transitions), and

including information on the transition process in school newsletters.

Transition planning policies state a district's philosophy regarding the transition of children from one educational placement to another and may be developed over time. In general, policies govern school districts' actions, and the development of a policy clearly demonstrates a school district's commitment to a particular aspect of educational service — in this case, transition planning. The adoption of a policy statement regarding transition planning facilitates implementation of a district's philosophy and ensures that transition planning becomes an inherent part of the educational system. A group of individuals representing planning teams from the five elementary schools in the Vermont Addison Northeast Supervisory Union developed the policy presented in TABLE 2.

TABLE 2

Policy on Transitioning Students Within Addison Northeast Supervisory Union

PURPOSE

It is the philosophy of the Addison Northeast Supervisory Union that all children have the right to equal access to quality education. Students with handicaps within this Supervisory Union, shall be integrated into the least restrictive educational environment that will assure them a free appropriate education.

POLICY

Each school will transition students with handicaps from one educational environment to the next with maximum opportunities

for emotional, social, physical and academic growth.

Each school will have and follow a written set of transition procedures. Elementary transitioning procedures must be consistent with receiving procedures at the high school.

Each school will form transition teams which may consist of sending and receiving teachers, special educators, administrators and other appropriate people. The teams will be responsible for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the transition process based on the IEP and current policies and procedures in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations within special education.

Each school will provide parents/guardians opportunities to be involved in the transition process.

Each school will prepare students for transition to the next environment by identifying those skills critical for functioning in the next environment and incorporating them into the student's current program.

Step Five: Evaluate the Transition Process

Evaluating the transition process promotes its effectiveness in addressing the needs and goals of its participants and ensures that the process is implemented consistently. The evaluation may assess: which procedures were or were not implemented, the extent to which parents and educators are satisfied with the procedures implemented, the child placement and service outcomes of the transition, and the extent to which parents and educators are satisfied with the child's transition.

Transition procedures should be evaluated during their initial implementation and annually thereafter. Members of teams from schools participating in TEEM who developed procedures offered the following suggestions for evaluation. School districts may:

have the team members who developed the procedures review them after a year of implementation and make necessary revisions,

review the procedures at scheduled primary team meetings,

revise the procedures informally as personnel and needs change and institute a formal system for incorporating revisions into the original procedures (e.g., an elementary school principal noted that when their transition process breaks down, a meeting is scheduled to discuss how to "get back on track"),

review the procedures yearly at a designated staff meeting, and/or

form a curriculum study group to ensure ongoing evaluation and revision of the transition process.

Many teams who developed the original transition procedures added an initial evaluation procedure to their written draft to ensure that evaluation is an integral part of the transition process. One planning team member noted that it is necessary to go through actual transition planning for at least a year to see what works and what should be changed.

An elementary school principal stressed that, regardless of changes in the process, it is important that those who develop the procedures congratulate themselves for a job well done. The process may change as a result of evaluation, but as one member stated, "We won't go back to not doing it!"

III. OVERALL IMPACT OF TEEM OUTREACH

A. Development of School/District Transition Procedures

By the end of the third year of TEEM Outreach, planning teams (representing over 200 families, early childhood and public school personnel, administrators, and other service providers such as Head Start staff) from 23 of Vermont's 60 school districts (encompassing 84 elementary schools) had received training through TEEM Outreach to assist them in developing and implementing systematic transition procedures. In addition, 5 school districts were trained and established as model sites during Project TEEM (the five districts represented three model sites, since these three districts are served by one early childhood program) when the model was being developed. Project staff provided year-long technical assistance to one additional school district during Project TEEM upon request to assist them in developing transition procedures, bringing to **29 the total number of school districts (representing 107 elementary schools and over 300 individuals) which received training through Project TEEM/TEEM Outreach**.

Of the **23 districts trained through TEEM Outreach**, three of these districts received ongoing one-to-one training through TEEM Outreach during the first year to establish them as three additional

model sites, for a total number of six model sites established throughout Vermont to assist in providing training and technical assistance to other school districts within their geographical region. The remaining 20 school districts participated in TEEM Outreach training institutes (Summer 1989, Winter 1990, Summer 1990, and Fall 1990) conducted by project staff and "regional trainers" from the six Project TEEM/TEEM Outreach model sites. By the end of the third year of TEEM Outreach, 18 of the 20 districts trained through TEEM Institutes had developed and implemented written transition procedures for at least one year. Of the two remaining districts, one was trained during the fall of 1990 and began implementation of their transition process in September 1991. The other remaining district does not have its own early childhood program. Children and families residing in this district receive ECSE services through the district's contract with a regional program providing services to young children with special needs and their families. The planning team from this particular district, however, chose to participate in a 1990 summer training institute in order to develop a long range plan for early childhood services and begin to apply principles from the TEEM model in working with the regional program on transition planning. They do not at this time have formal written transition procedures.

Please refer to Appendix B for a sample format for the TEEM Institutes. A follow-up day to occur after participating teams had the opportunity to partially implement their transition process was incorporated into each institute. Planning teams were able to share their particular "successes and challenges" with one another, identify the strengths and needs of their process up to that point, and identify areas of their process to work on that day, e.g., revise their process, develop supporting materials, resources, etc.

B. Impact Upon School/District Planning Teams

Fourteen of the 18 teams which developed and partially implemented their procedures spent time during the follow-up day in assessing the impact of the TEEM Institutes on the development and implementation of transition procedures and their progress between

Institute training and the follow-up day (the time between institute training and follow-ups ranged from six months for teams participating in summer institutes to one year for those participating in the winter institute). Thirteen teams responded that the Institute provided them with enough knowledge, skills and planning time to enable them to implement the draft of their transition procedures. One team felt they did not have enough planning time. All teams responded that their process was being implemented at some level for every child receiving ECSE services. Nine teams had engaged in either formal or informal evaluation of their transition process prior to the follow-up day through formal and informal meetings and ongoing evaluation as they implemented the transition process. As the result of their evaluation, teams noted they developed "to do" lists, added some procedures, changed some target dates for certain activities, and established a formal meeting time for the end of the school year.

Members of five planning teams noted they had contacted the "regional trainers" who had assisted at the institutes. Some of the teams borrowed materials developed to support the transition procedures in the model sites and asked regional trainers to attend one of their team meetings to further assist them in enhancing their written procedures.

Ten of the 14 teams noted that their transition procedures were becoming an integral part of educational planning in their districts, i.e., they were becoming "systematized". Factors which contributed to this included increased communication among faculty and the desire to focus on transition across grade levels, frequent meetings, the fact that the procedures were written, time to meet and assess the process, full support of the administration, cooperation of other staff, the commitment of the planning team to continue meeting to enhance the process and share it with other families and members of the district staff, and the fact that the activities promoted by the TEEM model are relevant for a number of educational practices, e.g., communication, sharing of information, meeting the individual needs of all students, etc. Teams which felt their process was not yet becoming a part of the system cited the need for more time to implement the process and "prove" its effectiveness, the need for

more administrative and teacher support to implement the process, and the need for the model to be generalized across age levels.

Thirteen of the fourteen teams felt the follow-up day was a valuable aspect of the Institute, giving them time to reflect and realize the value of their process, examine their progress, share helpful information and experiences with the other teams, and work on some practical issues, e.g., developing checklists, parent handbooks, etc. The additional team felt that the follow-up day should have occurred sooner after the four-day institute so that they would be "kept on track".

C. Impact Upon Individual Planning Team Members

TEEM Outreach gathered information from individual members of teams which were formed to plan for the transition of children by implementing the district transition procedures developed during the TEEM Institutes. These individuals were not necessarily members of the district planning teams which developed the transition procedures. **Seventeen members of individual transition planning teams** across the 18 districts which had developed and implemented their procedures for at least one year responded voluntarily to a survey distributed through the district early childhood coordinators. These individuals included elementary special educators, kindergarten teachers, Essential Early Education coordinators/teachers, related service providers (occupational and physical therapists, speech-language pathologists), and principals.

The goal of this survey was to collect information about how satisfied members of transition planning teams were with the process as it was implemented for children entering the elementary school in Fall 1991, i.e., planning occurred over the 1990-1991 school year, reflecting how well the TEEM model assisted the district in developing effective transition procedures.

The survey questions were structured around the best practice areas identified by TEEM. Each best practice area involved answering questions on a scale of 1 to 5, with "1" being "not at all satisfied" or "unimportant" and "5" being "extremely satisfied" or "extremely

important". Respondents were also asked to comment when they wished to do so. Results were as follow.

1. Families as Partners in Transition Planning

Across respondents, there was a high degree of satisfaction (4.0) with their transition procedures in ensuring that families actively participate in transition planning to whatever extent they choose to do so. Many felt that the early childhood staff was critical in promoting this participation, but indicated that the more the entire team participates in the process, the easier it will become for others to ensure this happens. People did note, however, that this is an area that needs constant "nurturing" and decision-making needs to become a much more shared process between families and staff. Respondents felt that it is extremely important (4.7) to promote family participation in the transition process. There was a high degree of satisfaction (4.0) that their procedures ensured the establishment of methods for sharing information between home and school once the child entered the elementary school. Individuals felt it was extremely important (4.5) that procedures for sharing information be a part of the transition process.

2. Systematic, Individualized, Timely, and Collaborative Planning

There was a high degree of satisfaction (4.1) among respondents that their transition procedures ensure that transition planning will become a systematic component of educational services in their respective districts. Individuals noted factors which will contribute to this happening include increased awareness of the need for transition planning, administrative support for the planning process, development of policies which will formalize the procedures, and, over time, the involvement of more and more individuals who will be invested in the process. Respondents felt it was extremely important (4.8) that transition planning becomes a systematic component of

district educational planning/services and that it occurs across all grade levels.

Across respondents, there was a high degree of satisfaction (4.2) that their procedures ensure individualized planning for children and families. They felt it was extremely important (4.7) that planning be individualized within their process. There was a lesser degree of satisfaction (3.9) across respondents with the degree to which their procedures ensure timely transition planning for children. Individuals noted that initial meetings could have been held earlier, but also noted that, with increased implementation, the need to plan earlier will become increasingly obvious. Team members felt it is extremely important (4.8) that timely planning be an important part of the overall transition process. It was noted that families need more time to "process" information and the home/school partnership needs time to "percolate" to insure a better outcome for all concerned. School districts also often need time to make necessary budget accommodations for materials, resources, training, etc.

Across respondents, there was a high degree of satisfaction (4.2) that their transition procedures ensure active collaboration among families, school personnel, and other individuals relevant to a child's transition. It was noted by one respondent, however, that schools need to make increased efforts to include parents as part of their child's planning team. Another noted it is critical to ensure there is a communication system among members, e.g., minutes taken, so that information can be shared among all members regardless of attendance at meetings. Across respondents, there was a high degree of satisfaction (4.3) with their participation as members of individual planning teams. One individual noted that the transition team allows for "a lot of collaboration, refreshing ideas, novel approaches for learning, and an energized feeling when we successfully meet a challenge." Another respondent noted being a member of a team is so important, as it "allows me far better knowledge of the student's needs as they develop". As another individual noted, however, "I have found it very time consuming and often frustrating!". There was a lesser degree of satisfaction (3.8) across respondents with the degree to which they were satisfied with how well the planning team functioned

as a whole in transition planning. Comments cited philosophical differences among team members and a lack of administrative involvement and support for team decisions as two factors which contributed to less than optimal team functioning. Again, respondents felt it was extremely important (4.7) that collaborative planning be part of the overall transition process. Individuals noted that teamwork encourages great ideas from individuals who might otherwise not speak up. Comments did cite the need for consensus decision-making and open communication and conflict resolution as critical to making the collaborative process work successfully.

3. Preparation of the Child for Entry into the Elementary School

There was a high degree of satisfaction (4.4) across respondents that their transition procedures ensure the provision of opportunities for children to learn developmentally-appropriate skills which promote successful participation in the next educational setting. One early education teacher commented that the early education staff is receiving great support from the kindergarten teachers and administrators. Another individual noted that this activity has to be individualized for children and not occur on a program-wide basis. Respondents felt it was very important (4.5) to provide opportunities for children to learn developmentally-appropriate skills prior to entering kindergarten.

4. Preparation of the Elementary School

Across respondents, there was a lesser degree of satisfaction (3.5) with the degree to which their transition procedures ensure that the elementary school is prepared to support and integrate children, i.e., the planning team identifies and obtains appropriate resources and training in relation to physical setting, staff, and curriculum. Comments included the need to work on staff preparation, specifically training for paraprofessionals; unwillingness on some staff members' parts to want to prepare in advance; and the fact that money issues

continue to "bog down" the process vs. finding creative solutions to identified needs. Across individuals it was felt it is extremely important (4.7) that the transition procedures ensure advance preparation of the school.

5. Placement, Integration, and Education of the Child in the Elementary School

There was a high degree of satisfaction (4.2) across respondents that their transition procedures ensure that a child's progress will be monitored in the elementary school. One individual noted there are weekly meetings between the kindergarten teacher, family, and support staff. Another noted that the early childhood teacher continues to follow children during their year in kindergarten, i.e., she is able to work in the classroom and monitor progress. Across respondents, it was felt it is extremely important (4.3) that their transition process incorporates procedures for monitoring a child's progress once he or she is in the elementary school. Individuals overall were highly satisfied (4.1) that their transition procedures ensure follow-up support from the early childhood staff and that this is an extremely important (4.3) component of the transition process.

Respondents showed a high degree of satisfaction (4.2) with the next educational placement(s) and program(s) of the child(ren) in whose transition planning they participated.

When asked which of the above area(s) of their transition process they felt needs revision or "fine-tuning", the majority of respondents cited preparation of the elementary school, monitoring and follow-up support, promoting family participation/partnerships in transition planning, and promoting more collaboration. All areas, however, were cited as needing improvement/enhancement.

D. Impact Upon Families

A total of 28 surveys were completed by families whose children made the transition from early childhood programs in Spring 1990

(16 families) and Spring 1991 (12 families). Families were asked to either respond "yes/no", circle a number on a scale of 1 to 5, with "1" being "not at all helpful" or "not at all satisfied" and "5" being "extremely helpful" or "extremely satisfied", and/or comment when they wished to do so in relation to: 1) their opportunities for participation in transition planning, 2) extent of their participation in the planning, and 3) degree of satisfaction with the transition planning process.

1. Opportunities for Participation

Twenty-five families (89%) stated they had received information about their local school's procedures for transition planning prior to their child leaving the early childhood program and indicated that they found the information extremely helpful (4.4). In response to how they received this information, families mentioned the following: through meetings, handbooks, open houses, phone calls, and letters. Additional responses indicated that:

a. 79% (22 families) had the opportunity to be a team member to plan for their child's transition,

b. 79% (22 families) had the opportunity to visit their child's current school and classroom (i.e., their child's educational placement after leaving the early childhood program),

c. 75% (21 families) had the opportunity to participate in transition planning meetings,

d. 71% (20 families) were provided with information which helped them prepare for planning meetings,

e. 64% (18 families) had opportunities to identify goals for their child's transition, and

f. 68% (19 families) were provided with opportunities to identify how they would like to share information with their child's teacher(s) once he or she entered the elementary school.

Families noted other ways in which they participated in the planning process, including visiting the future placement with their

child, going to school registration meetings, participating in the COACH process to collaboratively develop educational plans, and riding the school bus with their child to the elementary school to spend an extended period in kindergarten prior to the transition.

2. Extent of Participation in Transition Planning

Of those families having opportunities made available to them,

a. 64% (18 families) chose to be a team member to plan for their child's transition,

b. 68% (19 families) visited their child's current school and classroom,

c. 64% (18 families) participated in transition planning meetings,

d. 43% (12 families) took advantage of information which helped them prepare for planning meetings,

e. 46% (13 families) identified goals for their child's transition, and

f. 57% (16 families) were provided with opportunities to identify how they would like to share information with their child's teacher(s) once he or she entered the elementary school.

3. Satisfaction with the Transition Process

Among the 28 families surveyed, there was general satisfaction (3.8) that there was adequate time to plan for their child's transition. One family member noted that "things were not in place" by September when their child entered the school. Another noted that they received nothing from the school related to registration or who their child's teacher was. There was a high degree of satisfaction (4.1) among families, however, related to the overall planning process. There was an extremely high degree of satisfaction (4.5) across families in relation to their child's next educational placement. Again, one family noted that they did not know their child's placement at the end of the school year. Another family expressed dismay that their

child had been "labeled" and they perceived him being treated in a negative manner as a result.

When asked what else might have improved their child's transition from preschool, families cited the following: spending more time in the future placement, riding the school bus with their child prior to the first day of school, having the principal and kindergarten teachers visit the preschool prior to the transition, more advanced planning to prepare the physical space to accommodate their child's specific areas of need, and better communication among the school staff. All 16 families whose children entered elementary school in Fall 1990 noted that they have opportunities to meet or share information with their child's current teacher(s). Of the 12 families whose children entered elementary school in September 1991, seven families noted they had a plan to share information with their child's teacher(s) during the 1991-1992 school year.

E. Impact Upon Children

Evaluation data were collected to determine: 1) placements of children receiving ECSE services who were eligible to graduate from preschool programs in 1990 and 1991, the second and third years of the project; 2) types of transition activities which occurred; and 3) critical factors which contributed to the ease of difficulty of individual transitions. Evaluation results are based on those districts which served as model sites and those districts which developed their transition procedures through TEEM Institutes and implemented them for at least one year.

1. Placements

Children Who Graduated Spring 1990

A total of 72 children receiving ECSE services were eligible to graduate from preschool programs across 12 districts which had developed and implemented transition procedures - eight districts which represented model sites and four districts which received

training through the Summer 1989 TEEM Institute (the one district which received technical assistance through Project TEEM did not participate in the evaluation activities during TEEM Outreach). Of the 72 children who graduated, 62 entered their local kindergarten classroom. Two children entered grade 1, one child entered a kindergarten/grade 1 combination classroom, two children entered a readiness kindergarten, two children entered a pre-kindergarten classroom, one child entered a combination kindergarten/resource room program, and two children moved away and placement was unknown.

Children Who Graduated Spring 1991

A total of 201 children receiving ECSE services were eligible to graduate from preschool programs in Spring 1991 across a total of 26 districts which had developed and implemented transition procedures - in addition to the twelve districts noted above, another 14 districts implemented their transition procedures during the 1990-1991 school year as a result of training received through TEEM 1990 Institutes (in addition to the one district cited above which did not participate in evaluation activities, please refer to section A., Development of School/District Transition Procedures, which explains the status of the remaining two districts which participated in TEEM Outreach trainings during 1990 but did not implement transition procedures during the 1990-1991 school year).

Of the 201 children, 191 children entered their local kindergarten classrooms, two entered grade 1, two entered pre-kindergarten classrooms, one entered a combination kindergarten/resource room program, one entered an elementary resource room, two entered an intensive needs classroom in their local elementary school, one entered a regional program, and one remained in the preschool program for an additional year.

2. Types of Transition Activities

Along with designating placements, the early childhood coordinators were asked to specify the types of transition activities which occurred for each child leaving their program. All coordinators stated that transition activities occurred at some level for each child. The amount and type of activities varied according to the individual child and family. Overall, the major types of activities which occurred included: establishment of transition teams, transition team meetings, earlier placement decisions (i.e., designating the receiving classroom teacher earlier than this might typically occur), observations of potential next educational settings, use of parent handbooks to discuss transition planning with families and assist them in identifying activities in which they wanted to participate or what they wanted to happen for their child during the transition planning, observations of the preschool settings by receiving administrators and staff, hiring of paraprofessionals earlier than this typically occurs, visits by children and families to the elementary school to observe all environments and meet with all staff (music, art, physical education, etc.), inservice trainings for receiving staff, development of "transition IEPs" with receiving kindergarten teacher and other relevant staff to ensure services were in place from day one in the new setting and that the goals reflected shared planning, videotaping of preschool and children to share information among team members, and follow-up Fall transition team meetings to assess the effectiveness of individual transitions.

It is of particular note that personnel in several districts have come up with a very effective strategy for observing one another's particular setting. Along with perhaps videotaping one another's setting, preschool and kindergarten teachers have "substituted" in one another's classroom so that each can have an extended length of time getting to know the setting and children. Many creative and cost-effective solutions such as these have occurred as a result of the sharing of ideas during team meetings.

3. Critical Factors Which Contributed to the Ease or Difficulty of Transition Planning

The Early Childhood Coordinators cited many factors which made transition planning successful for children, their families, and staff. Such factors included: administrative support for release time for members of planning teams to meet and make observations, collaboration/communication among families and staff, more frequent meetings, family familiarity with the transition process from past experience with another child, philosophy among staff at elementary school for the inclusion of **all** children, financial commitment of elementary school for providing necessary resources, small size of transition planning team, knowledge about the district transition process among all staff, beginning the transition planning earlier, willingness of all staff to be involved in transition activities, open communication between family and school, understanding of child's strengths and areas of need by all professionals, earlier placement decisions, observations by families and staff of current and future educational settings, participation of family in providing technical assistance and training to receiving staff, and increased communication among all involved.

Among the factors which sometimes contributed to a difficult planning process, Early Childhood Coordinators cited the following: lack of participation in planning by receiving staff, late placement decisions, trying to schedule meeting times to accommodate different family and staff schedules, and lack of consensus among team members when trying to make decisions. Several coordinators noted that it is sometimes challenging to ensure that the family participates to the maximum extent possible in the planning, yet it is one of the most critical factors in making the transition a truly successful and effective one.

IV. SUMMARY

The transition of young children with special needs to kindergarten and other regular educational environments presents several challenges. A successful transition requires that a number of critical elements be in place. There must be system-wide commitment to the goals of the transition process and system-wide understanding of and support for implementing the transition process. The transition process must address the individual needs of children, families, and educators and incorporate current best practices. The TEEM model provides families and educators with information and a reliable planning framework from which to develop their own model for transition planning.

APPENDIX A

BEST PRACTICES AND CRITICAL ACTIVITIES FOR PLANNING TRANSITIONS FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS TO KINDERGARTEN AND OTHER REGULAR EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS

Best Practices and Critical Activities for Planning Transitions from Early Childhood Programs to Kindergarten and Other Regular Education Environments

I. Family members should receive the necessary information, support, and opportunities to enable them to participate as equal partners in planning their child's transition.

1. Families should receive information about the school's transition policies and procedures.
2. The family's goals for their child's transition, the types of information and support needed, and their desired level of participation should be determined as part of the transition process.
3. Families should receive assistance in obtaining the desired information, support, and opportunities for participation in planning their child's transition.
4. The family and elementary staff should identify the methods they will use to share information once the child is enrolled in kindergarten.

II. Planning the child's transition from an early childhood special education program to kindergarten and elementary school should occur in a systematic, individualized, timely, and collaborative fashion.

5. Local elementary school staff should be informed well in advance about children with special needs who will be entering kindergarten.
6. Early childhood special education and elementary school staff who will collaborate with the child's family to initiate and coordinate the transition planning process should be identified early in the transition process.
7. The child's potential kindergarten classroom placement should be identified early in the transition process.
8. A transition planning team should be established for each child.
9. Information about the child and the education programs important to the transition process should be identified and exchanged among transition team members.
10. The child's individual transition plan should be developed well in advance of his or her entry into kindergarten.

III. The early childhood special education program should provide opportunities for the child to learn developmentally appropriate skills which promote the child's successful participation in kindergarten and other regular education environments.

11. Skills for enhancing the child's successful participation in the kindergarten classroom and elementary school should be identified early in the transition process.

12. Teaching and management practices and routines used in the kindergarten classroom and elementary school should be identified.

13. If appropriate, the child should be provided with opportunities to learn developmentally appropriate skills, and kindergarten routines and teaching practices should be integrated into the child's preschool program.

IV. The elementary school should prepare to successfully integrate and educate the child in the kindergarten and elementary school.

14. Prior to the child's entry into the elementary school, public school staff should obtain necessary training and technical assistance.

15. Prior to the child's entry into the elementary school, the school should obtain necessary resources including personnel, instructional materials, and adaptive equipment and should complete building improvements.

16. Prior to the child's entry into the elementary school, the transition planning team should determine strategies for promoting the child's successful participation in each kindergarten and school activity.

V. The elementary school staff should provide the necessary services to promote and support the child's placement, integration, and education in the kindergarten classroom and elementary school.

17. Elementary school staff should monitor the child's participation in the kindergarten classroom and other elementary school settings.

18. Early childhood special education staff should provide the child, family, and elementary school staff with follow-up support.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR TEEM INSTITUTES

Agenda - TEEM Institute

August 21-24, 1990 - 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Ascutney Mountain Resort - Region 5

DAY 1

8:00 - 8:30	Check-In - Refreshments Welcome/Introductions/Announcements/Day Overview Characteristics of Teams Characteristics of Team Members Value Systems that Affect Teamwork
10:15-10:30	BREAK
	Whole Team Dysfunction/Potential Solutions Subteam Dysfunction/Potential Solutions
11:30-12:30	LUNCH ON OWN
	Overview of Afternoon Activities Video: "Home to School" and "Parents and Teachers in Partnership Discussion of Video
2:15-2:30	BREAK
	Fact-Finding Related to Transition Evaluation/Homework

DAY 2

8:00 - 8:30	Arrival - Refreshments Welcome/Introductions/Announcements/Day Overview Goal-Setting Relative to Fact-Finding
9:45-10:00	BREAK
	Drafting of Philosophy Statement
11:30-12:30	LUNCH ON OWN
	Overview: Best Practices in Transition Planning Panel with Regional Trainers: Issues in Transition Planning Format for Drafting Transition Procedures Discussion/Drafting of Procedures Evaluation/Homework

DAY 3

8:00 - 8:30	Arrival - Refreshments Welcome/Introductions/Announcements/Day Overview Discussion/Drafting of Transition Procedures
11:30-12:30	LUNCH ON OWN
	Discussion/Drafting of Procedures Evaluation

DAY 4

8:00 - 8:30	Arrival - Refreshments Welcome/Introductions/Announcements/Day Overview Development of Format for Written Procedures
11:30-12:30	CATERED PICNIC LUNCH FOR ALL
	Large Group Presentation: Gaining System-Wide Support and Commitment - "The Right Stuff" Panel with Regional Trainers: "The Right Stuff" Overview of Plan of Action Team Discussions: Next Steps Sharing of Next Steps
	Development of Plan of Action
	Evaluation/Celebration!

AGENDA

Summer 1990 TEEM Institute Follow-Up

March 22, 1991

Ascutney Mountain Resort - Region 5

8:30 - 8:45	Arrival/Refreshments
8:45 - 9:00	Welcome
9:00 - 11:00	Teams: 1) Review Summer Plan of Action, 2) Identify Strengths and Issues Related to Development of Transition Process, 3) Identify Strengths and Issues Related to Implementation of Process, 4) Identify Strategies which Facilitated Implementation of the Process, e.g., release time to observe, relief from committee responsibilities, presentation to school board, 5) Determine Next Steps, and 6) Complete, as a Team, "Checklist for Evaluating the Implementation of District/School Transition Process"
11:00 - 11:45	Large Group Sharing/Discussion Based on Above Activities
11:45 - 12:30	Teams: 1) Revise or Develop New Plan of Action 2) Complete TEEM Evaluation Survey 3) Determine Afternoon Agenda

APPENDIX C

WORKSHEET TO DEVELOP WRITTEN TRANSITION PROCEDURES

Worksheet to Draft Written Transition Procedures

School/District: _____ Dates: _____

Drafted by: _____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

This worksheet provides district transition planning teams with the information and format for developing their own transition procedures. The 18 critical activities for implementing the five best practices in transition planning, found on the following pages, should be addressed by the planning team in the development of its transition procedures. Space is provided for the team to record:

(a) **procedures** for carrying out the specific activity;

(b) **time lines** indicating when the specific procedure should be carried out (Note that time lines may vary depending on the needs of individual children, and this variation should be reflected in the time lines. For example, for children with specific needs, the time line for a specific activity might begin in the spring two years prior to the child's transition); and

(c) **who** will be responsible for carrying out the procedures.

BEST PRACTICE: **Family members should receive the necessary information, support, and opportunities to enable them to participate as equal partners in planning their child's transition.**

Critical Activities and Procedures	Time Line	Who
Provide families with information about the school's transition policies and procedures. Procedure:		
Determine family's goals for transition, types of information and support needed, and desired level of participation. Procedure:		
Provide family with assistance, as needed, to obtain desired information, support, and opportunities for participation in planning child's transition. Procedure:		
Identify methods the family and elementary staff will use to share information once child is enrolled in kindergarten. Procedure:		

BEST PRACTICE: **Planning the child's transition from an early childhood special education program to kindergarten and the elementary school should occur in a systematic, individualized, timely, and collaborative fashion.**

Critical Activities and Procedures	Time Line	Who
Inform local elementary school staff about children who will be eligible for kindergarten. Procedure:		
Identify transition coordinators. Procedure		
Identify potential kindergarten classroom placement. Procedure:		
Establish a transition planning team. Procedure:		

BEST PRACTICE: **Planning the child's transition . . . cont'd.**

Critical Activities and Procedures	Time Line	Who
Exchange information about the child and the educational programs. Procedure:		
Develop individual transition plan. Procedure:		
Additional procedures? Comments?		
Additional procedures? Comments?		

BEST PRACTICE: **The early childhood special education program should provide opportunities for the child to learn developmentally appropriate skills which promote the child's successful participation in kindergarten and other regular education environments.**

Critical Activities and Procedures	Time Line	Who
Procedure: **Identify kindergarten survival skills.**		
Procedure: **Identify kindergarten teaching and management practices and routines.**		
Procedure: **If appropriate, the child should be provided with opportunities to learn developmentally appropriate skills, and kindergarten teaching and management practices and routines should be integrated into the preschool program.**		
Additional Procedures? Comments?		

BEST PRACTICE: **The elementary school should prepare to successfully integrate and educate the child in the kindergarten and elementary school.**

Critical Activities and Procedures	Time Line	Who
Procedure: **Provide public school staff with training and technical assistance.**		
Procedure: **Obtain resources necessary to educate and integrate the child in the elementary school.**		
Procedure: **Determine strategies for promoting the child's successful participation in each kindergarten and school activity.**		
Additional Procedures? Comments?		

BEST PRACTICE: **The elementary school staff should provide the necessary services to promote and support the child's placement, integration, and education in the kindergarten classroom and elementary school.**

Critical Activities and Procedures	Time Line	Who
Monitor the child's participation in the kindergarten classroom and other elementary school settings. Procedure:		
Provide the child, family, and elementary school staff with follow-up support from early childhood special education staff. Procedure:		
Additional Procedures? Comments?		
Additional Procedures? Comments?		

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE TRANSITION PROCEDURES

Springfield Supervisory District
Transition Planning Form

Student Name: _____ Sending Program: _____

Date of Meeting: _____ Receiving School: _____

Person Coordinating Transition: _____

Planning Team Members

NAME	TITLE
_____	Parent(s)
_____	Essential Early Education
_____	Speech & Language Pathologist
_____	Resource Teacher
_____	Director of Special Ed.
_____	Kindergarten Teacher(s)
_____	Occupational Therapist
_____	Physical Therapist
_____	Preschool Teacher
_____	Guidance
_____	School Nurse
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

1. Recommendations for Fall 19__ classroom	Considerations: Date to know by:
2. Parent completes and shares worksheet with transition team.	
3. Familiarize team with student's strengths and needs (i.e., medical history, PT/OT, vision, hearing, COC evaluations).	Reports to gather:

4. Preschool completes and shares survival skills checklist.	Considerations:
5. Develop specific transition activities (e g , receiving teacher to observe child in current setting).	
6. Determine inservice training needs.	

7. Identify related services.	Recommendations for services:
8. Identify resources currently provided to students and existing available resources.	
9. Identify Case Manager to receive records.	
10. First transition follow-up meeting.	When?

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